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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
TRSE-00 SIL-01 LAB-04 /071 W
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R 261610Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3813

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 11809

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJ: AMBASSADOR GARDNER'S MEETING WITH PSDI SECRETARY PIER
LUIGI ROMITA

SUMMARY: SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC SECRETARY ROMITA REMAINS EXTREMELY SKEPTICAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND INTENDS TO WORK MORE CLOSELY WITH THE SOCIALISTS SO THAT THE TWO PARTIES CAN JOIN THE DC IN GOVERNING WITHOUT THE COMMUNISTS. THIS OBJECTIVE WILL TAKE SOME TIME TO WORK OUT AND IN THE MEANTIME ROMITA STRONGLY FAVORS MAINTIANING THE PRESENT GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT. ROMITA ALSO EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES IN THE FALL. END SUMMARY.

1. I HAD AN EXTREMELY FRIENDLY AND USEFUL LUNCHEON WITH PIER LUIGI ROMITA, SECRETARY OF THE PSDI ON JUNE 21. I WAS DEEPLY IMPRESSED BY HIS INTELLIGENCE, HIS FRIENDSHIP TO THE U.S., AND HIS SERIOUS COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE A PROGRESSIVE, NON-COMMUNIST AND LEFT-OF-CENTER ALTERNATIVE FOR ITALIAN DEMOCRACY. THE FOLLOWING ARE MAIN POINTS ROMITA MADE:

2. ROMITA'S BASIC AIM IS TO STRENGTHEN THE QUOTE SOCIALIST AREA UNQUOTE TO THE POINT WHERE THE DC, THE PSI AND THE PSDI CAN GOVERN WITHOUT THE PCI. THIS
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COULD TAKE FORM EITHER OF THE PCI IN OPPOSITION OR THE PCI IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY BUT WITH LESS INFLUENCE THAN IT HAS NOW.

3. THIS OBJECTIVE WILL HAVE TO BE ACHIEVED GRADUALLY. IT IS DESIRABLE NOT TO
CHANGE THE PRESENT GOVERNING FORMULA NOW BECAUSE TO

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PROVOKE A CRISIS MIGHT HELP THE PCI. NEITHER THE PSI
NOR PSDI ARE READY FOR NEW ELECTIONS.

4. NO UNION OF THE LEFT IS POSSIBLE IN ITALY UNLESS
AND UNTIL THE PCI RENOUNCES LENINISM AND ITS ESSENTIALLY
PRO-SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY. THE MISTAKE OF THE PSI DURING
THE LAST THRITY YEARS WAS TO PUT LEFT UNITY BEFORE THE
DE-LENINIZATION OF THE PCI RATHER THAN AFTER. CRAXI
AGREES WITH THIS.

5. BERLINGUER AND HIS FOLLOW QUOTE REFORMERS UNQUOTE
ARE CURRENTLY BLOCKED IN THEIR EFFORTS AT FURTHER
EVOLUTION BY THE PRO-SOVIET HARD-LINE GROUP OF LONGO,
INGRAO, PAJETTA AND COSSUTTA, BUT IT SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED
THAT BERLINGUER AND HIS NUMBER TOW CHIARAMONTE, ARE ALSO
LENINISTS WHO SEE THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE AS A MEANS TO
ESTABLISH THE HEGEMONY OF THE PCI. BERLINGUER IS A
BELIVERE IN GRAMSCI, WHO TRIED TO APPLY LENINISM TO
ITALIAN CONDITIONS. THE CHALLENGE IS TO HELP BERLINGUER
TO A REAL ACCEPTANCE OF PLURALISM AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY.

6. RELATIONS BETWEEN ROMITA AND CRAXI ARE QUITE GOOD,
BUT THERE IS NO PROSPECT OF UNIFICATION OF THE TWO
PARTIES IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THEY COULD, HOWEVER,
COOPERATE INCREASINGLY TO CREATE A LARGE QUOTE
PROGRESSIVE AREA UNQUOTE SUPPRTED POTENTIALLY BY ABOUT
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25 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE. IN ROMITA'S
VIEW, THE PCI'S LONG TERM ELECTORIAL SHARE IS ONLY 25
PERCENT AND COULD EVEN BE REDUCED TO ABOUT 20 PERCENT.
THE DANGER WITH CRAXI, ROMITA, SAID, IS THAT IN HIS
ATTMEPT TO DEMONSTRATE INDEPENDENCE OF THE PCI, HE MAY GO
TOO FAR AND PROVOKE A POLITICAL CRISIS.

7. ON THE SUBJECT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS,
ROMITA SAW RISKS IN ALL THREE OF THE LEADING DC CANDIDATES.
PUTTING ZACCAGNINI IN THE AUIRINALE HAS THE ADVANTAGE
OF RESTORING BALANCE TO THE DC SECRETARIAT (HE DESCRIBED
GALLONI, GRANELLI, TEC, AS TOO WILLING TO COMPROMISE WITH
PCI), BUT HE FEARS THAT THE PRICE OF PUTTING ZACCAGNINI
IN PRESIDENCY WILL BE A DEAL WITH PCI NOT TO CHANGE THE
QUADRO POLITICO OR HOLD ELECTIONS UNITL 1981. THE
DISADVANGE OF FRAFANI IS THAT HE IS TOO CONSERVA-
TIVE AND PUTTING HIM IN THE PRESIDENCY WOULD LEAVE
ZACCAGNINI AND HIS GROUP IN CHARGE OF THE PARTY.
ELECTING ANDREOTTI WOULD CREATE A DANGEROUS VACUUM AT
THE HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT AND POSSIBLY ANOTHER POLITICAL
CRISIS.

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8. ASKED FOR HIS VIEW ON U.S. POLICY TOWARD ITALY,
ROMIA EXPRESSED GREAT SATISIFACTION WITH THE CARTER
ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION. HIS TWO CONCERNS, WHICH HE
SAID HE WAS SATISIFIED WERE NOW BEING MET, WERE THAT WE
SHOULD NOT GIVE EXCLUSIVE SUPPORT TO THE DC AND THAT
OUR POLICY OF NON-INTERFERENCE SHOULD NOT MEAN A FAILURE
TO USE OUR MORAL INFLUENCE. IN HIS VIEW THAT MEANT
AMONG OTHER THINGS, STRENGTHENING OUR INFORMATION,
EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EFFORTS AND ENCOURAGING CLOSER
CONTACTS BETWEEN BOTH THE PSDI AND THE PSI AND THE
CARTER ADMINISTRATION. AN IMPORVED IMAGE OF THE U.S.
IN ITALY HAS A DIRECT IMPACT ON ITALIAN POLITICS BY
ENCOURAGING THOSE WHO SUPPORT PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATIC
PARTIES: "THE DC HAS BEHIND IT THE CHURCH. THE PCI HAS
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THE USSR. OUR ONLY HOPE IS THE U.S. IF THE U.S. FAILS,
WE HAVE FAILED. IF THE U.S. SUCCEEDS, THAT HELPS US."

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 11809

9. ROMITA EXPRESSED GREAT INTEREST IN VISITING THE U.S.
IN THE FALL AND I AGREED TO HELP HIM ARRANGE HIS
PROGRAM. COMMENT: THIS TRIP WOULD BE VERY MUCH IN OUR
INTEREST. ROMITA SPEAKS GOOD ENGLISH AND SHOULD MAKE A
GOOD IMPRESSION ON ALL HE MEETS. HIS IS PARTICULARLY
WELL REGARDED IN U.S. LABOR CIRCLES. AT A LATER
STAGE, WE WILL MAKE SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR HIS
PROGRAM AND SUGGEST DATES TO THE DEPARTMENT. END

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COMMENT.GARDNER

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